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United for Quality Care

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Before the Labor Committee

In Support of SB 1178: AN ACT EXPANDING CONNECTICUT PAID SICK DAYS

Good Afternoon Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez and members of the Committee. My name is Angel Bailey and I am a Personal Care Attendant (PCA) living in Ansonia. I'm here today to ask you to support SB 1178 so that PCAs like me are able to take time off when we are sick and not have to worry about missing a day of pay.

I have worked as a PCA for six years and I love the work I do. As a PCA I cook, clean, help my consumer get dressed, do their hair, take them out shopping or to doctors appointments, and other tasks to care for them. The work I do as a PCA, allows my consumers to enjoy the same comforts as you and me. I am a lifeline for my consumers, but as a PCA I also need this work to be a lifeline for me.

I have to keep an incredibly tight budget just to make ends meet and save nothing. I also have to limit my hours to 25 per week so that I won't lose my Husky health insurance. We home care workers also do not have access to paid sick leave. I caught COVID and was out of work for nearly three weeks, and it was hell. I lost my sense of taste and smell and I had to survive on chicken broth, orange juice, ginger ale, etc. because I could barely eat. I was so weak that I couldn't get out of bed, and I had to keep a bucket beside my bed because I lost control of my bladder. Fortunately, I was vaccinated. If I wasn't, I could have ended up on a ventilator in the hospital or worse. I might not have been here today to submit this testimony.

Not only did I have to rely on my son and daughter for physical care, I also had to rely on them for financial assistance. Being bedridden at home, unable to work, I estimate that I lost over \$600 in wages. Home care workers cannot file for unemployment for being out sick on Covid. Covid pay ended July 2021, so those of us who got sick after that time were no longer able to benefit from it. We can't collect unemployment. Fortunately we were able to win paid sick time in our contracts last year, but the state has not created a system where we can actually get to use this time. This has put me back to square one of having to avoid taking time off. Meanwhile the bills keep coming in. I had to borrow money from my son to pay bills and rent. Are these the kind of problems that we should be facing as essential workers?

We are human beings. We deserve better. Please support SB 1178 and ensure that home care workers are covered under Connecticut Paid Sick Day laws.

Thank you for your time.